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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1133
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2563

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GEHRENBECK)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/2018

TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ AUTHORITIES RAID NORWEGIAN HELSINKI
COMMITTEE'S BISHKEK OFFICE

REF: A. BISHKEK 198

1B. BISHKEK 143

Classified By: P/E Chief Robert G. Burgess, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) On June 9, Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) officers conducted a raid on the Bishkek office of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC). The MVD questioned head of the office, Ivar Dale, about the organization's activities in Kyrgyzstan and threatened to deport him. (Note: The NHC has unsuccessfully attempted to register with the government since the office opened in 2006 and blames the Kyrgyz authorities for the delays in the process. End note.) The MVD officers did not present a search warrant but claimed that the raid was a "standard procedure" for all international NGOs. During the raid, officers sifted through the organization's files and photographed or filmed countless documents. At the request of NHC staff, several local human rights defenders, heads of international organizations, parliamentarians, and the Ombudsman arrived at the office to witness the MVD's actions.

12. (C) The NHC office in Norway immediately issued a press statement denouncing the raid as a "clear violation of international norms." However, in the days following the raid, we understand that NHC requested international representatives and other human rights activists not to raise the issue publicly. On June 25, the MVD issued a press statement which quoted the NHC as saying the MVD officers had acted within their legal jurisdiction and did not tread upon the rights of the NHC staff. The statement also noted that the NHC would not continue operations until it had completed the registration process with the Ministry of Justice. Despite the statement, the NHC office continues to operate, and a local partner to NHC told PolOff that the office has resumed all activities.

13. (C) One international human rights representative, who herself favored raising the issue publicly, told PolOff that Dale struck a deal with the MVD. Matilda Bogner, Regional Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the NHC had threatened to file charges against the MVD officers for the

illegal raid but offered to drop the charges and forget about the event if the office could remain open and Dale could stay in Kyrgyzstan. Bogner said that she disagreed with Dale's decision to strike a deal with the MVD instead of holding the ministry accountable for the illegal and unwarranted raid. She was further disappointed in NHC headquarters' request for the international community to refrain from raising the issue publicly.

¶4. (C) While the MVD claim that the raid was a "standard procedure," many local human rights workers speculate that the raid was conducted because of Kyrgyz sensitivity to Uzbek political issues or possibly as the result of pressure from the Uzbek government. The NHC office had recently announced a small grants program to fund human rights projects in Uzbekistan. Regardless of the apparent resolution of the situation, the bold raid sent an intimidating signal and is another sign of the government's increasing sensitivity to the activities of international human rights organizations.

YOVANOVITCH